



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Opening Remarks by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, at the CEM Workshop held at Zimbali Coastal Estate, Durban

10 November 2022

Deputy Minister

MEC's

Director-General

HoDs

Senior Management

It is my honour and privilege to address the Committee of Education Ministers, the highest decision-making body of the basic education sector.

I welcome all MECs, HoDs and senior education managers to the special CEM workshop.

Our responsibility as a sector is to provide basic education of the highest standards to our learners, leading to better living standards, reducing inequality and fighting poverty.

Our country's fundamental policy framework, the National Development Plan (NDP), is unequivocal; by 2030, South Africans should have the highest quality access to education and training, leading to significantly improved learning outcomes.

Quite correctly, the NDP says the performance of South African learners in international standardised tests should be comparable to that of learners from countries at a similar level of development and with similar levels of access, if not better.

Our obligation as political principals and education managers is to work without ceasing to improve learning outcomes in our lifetime.

Programme director, let me recap on our delivery outcomes as a sector for 2019-2024.

Our outcome number One is improved school-readiness of our children.

Outcome 2: All 10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools read for meaning.

Outcome 3: Youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9.

Outcome 4: Youths leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa.

Outcome 5: School physical infrastructure and environment that inspires learners to learn and teachers to teach.

As we all know, we have taken over the function of early learning from Social Development.

The function shift allows us to prepare all SA young people for schooling in the Early Childhood Centres.

We must make the ECDs genuine centres of learning, not just safe places to keep the young ones out of trouble while their mothers are at work.

The new dawn of the early childhood development sector gives us a second chance to deal head-on with the intergenerational poverty and rising inequality in our homeland rooted in vastly unequal opportunities for our youngest children.

In April, we launched the Thrive by Five Index 2021, which painted a picture of the critical developmental milestone of our children by the time they turn five.

The Thrive by Five Index constitutes the first (baseline) in a series of nationally and provincially representative surveys that will monitor trends over time in the proportions of children aged 4-5 years who are ‘on track’ for their age in key areas of development.

Programme director, I am pleased to provide truncated Thrive by Five Index outcomes.

- 65% of children attending Early Learning Programmes (ELPs) in South Africa fail to Thrive by Five.
- These Children Are Not On Track for cognitive and/or physical development.
- They face barriers to thriving, which limit their chances of realising their full potential.
- For Early Learning specifically, 45% of South African children attending ELPs are On track.
- The remaining 55% of children cannot do the learning tasks expected of children of their age, with 28% falling behind the expected standard.
- These children will need intensive intervention and are at risk of not catching up with their peers.
- While there is considerable variation in performance within income groups, children in the higher income groups outperform the rest.
- One in four children (25.1%) in this study show signs of long-term malnutrition, with equal stunting rates in boys and girls.
- Of those who are stunted, 5.3% were found to be severely stunted.
- These children are excessively short for their age due to chronic malnutrition and are at high risk of not achieving their cognitive potential.

- Social and emotional issues may further compound these delays.
- Social-Emotional functioning demonstrated a significant effect on learning outcomes - children who met the standard for social-emotional functioning performed better on the Early Learning Outcomes Measure (ELOM) 4&5.
- For social relations with peers and adults, 27.5% of children did not meet the standard.
- This number increases to 33.4% regarding emotional readiness for school.

As Basic Education, in preparation for the ECD function shift, we also embarked on the nationwide Census of the ECD centres.

We now know the level of access through the ECD Census data and intend to plan better resource allocation and improved access.

We know that we have 42,420 ECD centres in South Africa.

The data from the Census will also help as we will integrate it into the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

We all know how important data is. The President of HP Enterprise, Antonio Neri, said that “data is the new currency.”

We also know that in South Africa, roughly five (5) per cent of national expenditure, or 1.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is spent on ECDs.

From the Census, we know that majority (69%) of Early Learning Programmes mention fees as their main source of funding, followed by government funding (27%) and donations/ fundraising (4%).

The average monthly fee amount is R509 per child.

Many (77%) ECD centres provide meals for learners, and just under half (48%) of them, their parents, contribute to the meals.

The government provides meals at 17% of Early Learning Programmes.

Some 59% of ECD children can wash their hands using water from a tap, and flush toilets are available at 60% of Early Learning Programmes centres.

Since we know the numbers now and the size of the problem, we must find a viable ECD resource model.

We are currently working with the World Bank on Public Expenditure and Institutional Review (PEIR) to determine the amount of funding

that is being spent on ECD by the different government spheres and the various Government Departments.

The ECD Public Expenditure and Institutional Review in South Africa will include an expenditure analysis of ECD and an institutional analysis of the prioritised ECD outcomes.

Furthermore, the Public Expenditure and Institutional Review assesses the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of expenditure on ECD and their adequacy and sustainability relative to the country's ECD goals; and provides an integrated analysis of policies and institutions.

Programme director, there are global changes in societal expectations on post-schooling outcomes and constrained learner performance arising out of COVID-19.

As we know, significant learning losses have led to education systems reviewing their curriculum with deliberate and purposeful changes to the assessment landscape.

This year a lot was done to reform the assessment programme in GET.

This included reducing the formal assessment programme, adjusting progression weightings and promoting more holistic assessment forms

as an important part of gathering information about learners' capabilities.

Key strategies to facilitate this reform has been implementing more progressive pedagogies that lift Assessment for Learning.

Mitigating learning losses through a diagnostic assessment before introducing new topics, coupled with training subject advisors and lead teachers on formative assessment, have been conjured up to support the AFL implementation in 2023 and beyond.

The new Systemic Evaluation will supplement international monitoring of learning below Grade 12; based on samples of schools and following international best practices.

The results of the 2021 testing of Grades 3, 6 and 9 will be announced in the second quarter of 2023.

Programmes, such as Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and SEACMEQ, have played a critical role in monitoring progress in the past.

In the years to come, we will continue monitoring our performance in these Studies to understand how effectively we are recovering from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Next year (2023) will be the year of big data, as the results of PIRLS and SEACMEQ will complement the release of our own Systemic Evaluation.

One of the more innovative assessment reforms is the introduction of the Grade 9 General Education Certificate (GEC).

The GEC aims to ensure that youths remain in the schooling system motivated and equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills, and competencies they need for a rapidly changing 21st-century workplace.

The GEC implementation is currently being piloted and is set to be fully rolled out in all public schools in 2024.

Programme director, the infrastructure issue has been a bane in the sector for many years despite the ministry's monitoring progress every week through formal meetings and the exchange of documents.

However, there's a glimmer of hope.

From my infrastructure directorate, they report here for the first time in many years that good progress has been made in delivering school infrastructure despite backlogs and delays.

In 2012, the provincial education departments identified several critical infrastructure backlogs.

These included 327 schools made entirely of inappropriate materials, 1 272 schools with no water supply, 1 053 schools with no toilets and 373 schools with no electricity.

The Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) programme was launched to address these identified backlogs:

- So far, 306 completely new schools have been constructed, and the remaining 21 schools are scheduled for completion in 2022/23.
- A total of 1 251 water supply projects progressed to practical completion, and the remaining 21 projects are scheduled for completion in 2022/23.
- About 15 000 appropriate toilets were constructed at 1 047 schools.
- Sanitation projects at the remaining six schools are scheduled for completion in 2022/23.
- All of the 373 schools received electrical connections.

In 2018, all provincial education departments identified 3 898 schools dependent on basic pit toilets.

About 500 of these schools were rationalised, and about 600 other schools were later added to the list.

Subsequently, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, launched the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) programme to address the eradication of basic pit toilets at all identified schools.

As I speak, a whopping 50 000 appropriate toilets have been constructed at 2 388 schools.

Sanitation projects at the remaining 1 007 schools are scheduled for completion in 2023/24.

There are still significant challenges remaining in school infrastructure.

There are schools with no reliable water source, some buildings made of inappropriate materials, schools without libraries, computer centres and nutrition centres.

The capacity of provincial education departments to plan and implement infrastructure projects remains a concern.

At the end of October 2022, several provincial education departments utilised only 30% of the allocated grant.

As a sector, we need to consider the following:

- How can we limit our dependency on implementing agents?
- How can we involve the private sector to increase our capacity to deliver on infrastructure programmes?
- How can we create opportunities for small businesses, specifically women, youth and people with disabilities?
- How can we accelerate eradicating critical backlogs such as overcrowding, sanitation and water supply?
- How can we improve the condition of our schools through focused maintenance programmes?

Programme director; any curriculum worth the paper it is written on ought to be dynamic and respond to the changes and needs of the schooling community.

Despite progress in improving educational quality over the past 25 years, there is widespread agreement that the South African basic education system is not yet among the best.

Our assessment specialists believe that the system is not adequately equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to succeed in the 21st century and beyond.

In response, the sector identified several areas for improvement, including diversifying curriculum and adopting a curriculum with skills and competencies for a changing world.

This process started a few years ago with the development and adoption of the Three Stream Model to offer a curriculum relevant to the needs of the economy and the country.

We have made some progress with the Three Stream Model.

There's a pilot of a vocationally and occupationally oriented project in the General Education and Training GET Band and in the Schools of Skill.

In response to the changing world's demands and the fourth industrial revolution, the sector developed curricula for coding and robotics.

Teacher training in this area is at an advanced stage as part of the preparation for full implementation.

We are now preparing for the development of a pilot for implementation in the Further Education and Training (FET) Band.

This year, the sector restarted the curriculum review process, which was delayed by the COVID crisis.

This process intends to build on the work to produce and implement the Recovery Framework 2021-2024.

We are conducting comprehensive curriculum strengthening that will take into cognisance learners' competencies they need to thrive socially and economically in a fast-changing world.

One fundamental approach in bringing this vision to life is to mainstream competencies, which include knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

We seek to deliberately and systematically into the CAPS to ensure that learners exit the system with relevant skills, values, attitudes, and mindsets for the future.

In addition to this priority, a range of complementary updates could be pursued under the banner of Curriculum Strengthening.

These include subject modernisation, content modernisation, adaptations to timetabling and infusing cross-cutting themes across the curriculum.

Programme director; I am aware that I am running out of time, but the issue of overcrowding is critical if we improve the overall standards of our basic education system.

As we know, overcrowding is linked to infrastructure backlogs that we are experiencing across the country.

I tasked our officials to work on alternative ways to unlock the backlogs and deal with overcrowding.

The officials have presented a Concept Note that we will discuss in full.

The Concept Note calls for an innovative community-based model for education infrastructure for the schools by the schools.

This alternative delivery model aims to cut out red tape, reduce delivery timelines, and remove middlemen.

It would also ensure that the correct quantity and appropriate educational infrastructure are delivered within budget, cost and time constraints.

The model presents a drastic departure from the conventional contracting model, whereby the primary beneficiary of the assets becomes the primary client / main contractor.

In a nutshell, the model requires the school to have adequate capacity to plan, procure, manage, and implement infrastructure projects in line with the approved Site Development Plans.

This is a ground-breaking innovation aimed at empowering the ultimate users of infrastructure to become part and parcel of the delivery chain instead of being recipients of completed assets.

This model will introduce a new culture of accountability and responsibility regarding how these assets will be looked after, maintained, protected and secured by the community.

There is no doubt that this model entrenches a deep sense of pride because of the genuine community participation in creating educational assets, from inception to the final completion and commissioning of the assets.

The intention is to allow the various community stakeholders to play a meaningful role in the construction projects' planning, implementation and management.

Thus ensuring that there is a strong sense of buy-in and community ownership of the work that will be carried out.

This could minimise incidents of vandalism of the community infrastructure because the community will feel fully responsible for creating such infrastructure.

The model will be strengthened by structured technical support at both provincial and district levels of the provincial Departments of Education.

This model will also be implemented within the parameters of the Framework for Infrastructure Procurement and Delivery Management (FIPDM).

I fully support this model so that education managers at a local level take ownership of the school asset.

I thank you.